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BIBLIOGRAPHY OF LAPSUS CALAMI.

I. *First Edition, published April* 1891.

LAPSUS CALAMI. By J. K. S. Cambridge, Macmillan and Bowes, 1891. pp. viii+88.

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*To R. K.
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*The Grand old Pipe.
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*V. Of T. G.
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*Triolets Ollendorfiens.
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1. On the Fly-Leaf of Treasure Island.
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To my Friend's Wife.
Time's Revenges.
Köln, 5 July, 1882. 6.30 a.m.
*To a Friend.
*A Thought.
Lines at the River Side.
Facilis Descensus Averni.
*Early School.
Lines written at Private.
*An Election Address.

II. *Second Edition, published May* 1891.

The Contents are precisely the same as the first edition.

The following note was added at the back of the title-page:

Printed April 1891. Reprinted from standing type with slight alterations, May 1891.

The "slight alterations" were:

p. 9 line 7 their *corrected to* his.
p. 61 line 4 from foot, James *corrected to* Farrer.
„ last line, Luxmorre's *corrected to* Luxmoore's.

III. *Third Edition, printed June* 1891.

LAPSUS CALAMI. By J. K. S. New edition with considerable omissions and additions. pp. xi+92.

This edition contains the Poems marked * in the Contents of the first edition, with the following additions:

NOVI LAPSUS.

DE LAPSIBUS PRIORIBUS.

Two Roundels
1. The Poet's Prayer.
2. To an Indiscreet Critic.

From Three Fly-Leaves.
1. To P. L. aged 4½.
2. To B. C.
3. To R. C. B.

THE RETORT COURTEOUS.

I. England and America.
1. On a Rhine Steamer.
2. On a Parisian Boulevard.

II. Men and Women.
1. In the Backs.
2. On the King's Parade.

RESCUED FROM THE WASTE PAPER BASKET.

Parker's Piece, May 19, 1891.
The Street Organs Bill, 1891.
Ode on the 450th Anniversary Celebration at Eton.
Steam Launches on the Thames.
To B. H. H. (On his travels).
To Mrs B.
A Parodist's Apology.
A Sonnet.
To a Lady.
Regrets.
June 19, 1891.
To A. H. C.
To My Readers.

A New Preface to this Edition, dated June, 1891.

IV. *Fourth Edition, printed August* 1891.

The Contents are precisely the same as the third edition, but with new Preface dated August 1891.

The names of the Papers in which the Poems originally appeared are omitted and the following slight alterations were made:

p. 54 line 3 the note referring to laudum is omitted.
p. 84 verse 2 line 1 a tune *altered to* an air.
p. 84 last line perfumes *altered to* perfumed.
p. 86 verse 5 line 1 leafy *altered to* trailing.

QUO MUSA TENDIS?

Cambridge:
PRINTED BY C. J. CLAY, M.A. AND SONS,
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS.

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QUO MUSA TENDIS?

BY

J. K. STEPHEN

AUTHOR OF *LAPSUS CALAMI*

138821
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Cambridge
MACMILLAN AND BOWES
1891

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TO

M. R. S.

NOTE.

MANY of the pieces comprised in this volume have appeared in an ephemeral form during the last three months, and I beg hereby to express my acknowledgments to the editors of the *Saturday Review*, *Spectator*, *St James's Gazette*, *Globe*, *Pall Mall Gazette*, *National Observer*, and *Ariel* for permission to republish them.

J. K. STEPHEN.

18 TRINITY ST,
CAMBRIDGE,
Sept. 1891.

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Lapsus Calami.

I played with pen and ink at times,
  Until upon my table grew
A little heap of random rhymes:
  I got them printed, bound in blue,
And sold for more than they were worth,
To cause a moment's harmless mirth.

My little book achieved success,
  And wandered up and down the land;
A thousand copies more or less
  Were sold and paid for; that was grand;
And I was honestly surprised
To be so kindly criticised.

And when the little book was sold,
  I threw away the half of it;
And to the remnant of the old
  I tacked some new attempts at wit;
To which I added here and there
Some work prepared with greater care;

Some work in which I tried to shew
  That clowns can reason, jesters feel;
Nor need a scribbler lack the glow
  Of passion, or the fire of zeal
Because his verse is fairly neat,
And tries, at least, to be complete.

And having managed to acquire
  A public (as a fool I speak),
I thought to aim a little higher,
  A more substantial prize to seek;
And now I mean to write a book
Where men for fewer jests must look.

Kind readers who have borne with me
  When I confessed my school-boy rhymes,
And bought what purported to be
  A jest-book, turning grave at times,
I scarcely dare to hope that still
You'll read me: but perhaps you will.

And if you should insert me—Yes,
  You know the rest? upon the list
Of lyric bards—I ask no less—
  My head, if not precisely kissed
By stars, will wear at least a crown
Preferred to that which decks the clown.

NUGAE ETONENSES.

My Old School.

There's a long low wall with trees behind it,
And an old grey chapel behind the trees,
Neath the shade of a royal keep you'll find it,
Where Kings and Emperors take their ease.

There's another wall, with a field beside it,
A wall not wholly unknown to fame;
For a game's played there which most who've tried it
Declare is a truly noble game.

There's a great grey river that swirls and eddies
To the Bells of Ouseley from Boveney Weir,
With willowy stumps where the river's bed is,
And rippling shallows, and spaces clear.

There's a cloistered garden and four quadrangles,
And red brick buildings both old and new:
There's a bell that tolls, and a clock that jangles,
And a stretch of sky that is often blue.

There's a street that's alive with boys and masters:
And ah! there's a feeling of home for me:
For my boyhood's triumphs, delights, disasters,
Successes and failures were here, you see.

And if sometimes I've laughed in my rhymes at Eton,
Whose glory I never could jeopardise,
Yet I'd never a joy that I could not sweeten,
Or a sorrow I could not exorcise,

By the thought of my school, and the brood that's bred there,
Her bright boy faces, and keen young life:
And the manly stress of the hours that sped there,
And the stirring pulse of her daily strife.

For, mark, when an old friend meets another
Who have lived and remembered for years apart,
And each is as true as to best-loved brother,
And each has a faithful and tender heart;

Do they straight spread arms, and profess devotion,
And exhibit the signs of a heartfelt joy?
No; but each stands steady, and scorns emotion,
And each says:—How do you do, old boy?

And so, old school, if I lightly greet you,
And have laughed at your foibles these fifteen years,
It is just as a dear old friend I treat you,
And the smile on my lips is a mask for tears:

And it is not a form of words, believe me,
To say I am yours while my pulses beat,
And whatever garlands the fates may weave me
I'll lay right gladly at Eton's feet.

The Old School List*.

In a wild moraine of forgotten books,
On the glacier of years gone by,
As I plied my rake for order's sake,
There was one that caught my eye:
And I sat by the shelf till I lost myself.
And roamed in a crowded mist,
And heard lost voices and saw lost looks,
As I pored on an Old School List.

What a jumble of names! there were some that I knew,
As a brother is known: to-day
Gone I know not where, nay I hardly care,
For their places are full: and, they—
What climes they have ranged: how much they're changed!
Time, place and pursuits assist
In transforming them: stay where you are: adieu!
You are all in the Old School List.

* Suggested by accidentally finding an old copy of Stapylton's "Eton School Lists."

There are some who did nothing at school, much since:
And others much then, since naught:
They are middle-aged men, grown bald since then:
Some have travelled, and some have fought:
And some have written, and some are bitten
With strange new faiths: desist
From tracking them: broker or priest or prince,
They are all in the Old School List.

There's a grave grey lawyer in King's Bench Walk,
Whose clients are passing few:
He seldom speaks: in those lonely weeks,
What on earth can he find to do?
Well, he stroked the eight—what a splendid fate!—
And the Newcastle barely missed:
"A future Lord Chancellor!" so we'd talk
In the days of the old School List.

There were several duffers and several bores,
Whose faces I've half forgot,
Whom I lived among, when the world was young,
And who talked "no end of rot":
Are they now little clerks who stroll in the Parks
Or scribble with grimy fist,
Or rich little peers who hire Scotch moors?
Well—they're all in the old School List.

There were some who were certain to prosper and thrive,
And certain to do no more,

Who were "capital chaps," and, tho' moderate *saps*,
  Would never stay in *after four:*
Now day after day they are packed away,
  After being connubially kissed,
To work in the city from ten to five:
  There they are in the old School List.

There were two good fellows I used to know.
  —How distant it all appears!
We played together in football weather,
  And messed together for years:
Now one of them's wed, and the other's dead
  So long that he's hardly missed
Save by us, who messed with him years ago:
  But we're all in the Old School List.

PAULLO MAJORA CANAMUS.

A Remonstrance.

Love is what lacks then: but what does it mean
to you?
Where did you hear of it, feel it, or see?
What has the truth, or the good of it been to you?
How love some other, yet nohow love me?

If there were any conspicuous fault in me,
Any defect it were torture to bear,
Low-lying levels, too deep to exalt, in me,
Dread possibilities in me to fear:

If I were ugly or old or untractable,
Mean in my methods or low in my views:
If I were dull or unpleasant: in fact able
Neither to please, nor elate, nor amuse:—

That makes you angry, impatient; we'll take it, then,
I am a man that to know 's to esteem:
That's the admission you make to me: make it then:
Well why not love me? what's love but a dream?

Only of course in the sense you bestow on it:
I have a meaning for love, that is plain:
Further than passion, and longing, and so on, it
Means to me liking and liking again:

Liking and liking, and liking—that's plain enough;—
Something depending on qualities then?
Yes: for they give you both pleasure and pain enough,
Qualities common in women and men.

Still not a doubt that, the love being brought about,
Liking made love, there is more that will come:
All the good qualities ever yet thought about:—
Yes, they fall short of that excellent sum.

Like a man: like him: and let there be more of it
That which he is he'll be liked for: at last
Love in a minute will flash—I am sure of it—
Whether the wedding be future or past.

You who consider it quite immaterial
Whether the person is worthy or not:
You who are looking for something ethereal,
Something celestial, transcending our lot:

You to whom every excellent quality
Means but a cypher: who hope to behold
Love at a burst in his mighty totality
Change all the grey of the world into gold:

You dream a priceless love: I feel a penny one:
My reason plods, while your fancy can range:—
Therefore I ask, since you'll never love any one,
Why should you not marry me for a change?

A Joke.

You cannot, will not, never could;
Of course I knew it, what's the good?
I know you, you know me, and then
You know so many other men:
You like them all, you like me too;
And most of them in love with you!

But if it had been otherwise:
If I had happened, in your eyes,
To be what other men have been
In other people's eyes, my queen:
Why then, why then,—confound it all,
The world's abominably small!
I mean the world of sense and feeling;
A truism there's no concealing.

You're smiling: as you smiled before,
While I was asking you for more
Than you could give me, when I chanced
To drop a jest, how quick you glanced!
You seemed to say that love (we use
The word; how not?) would scarcely choose
Such phrases as we jesters store,
To "set the table in a roar."

Ah! if you'd wanted words red hot,
You might have had them; you did not,
It's hardly decent, I opine,
To prate of beautiful, divine,
Describe one's amorous symptoms, gloat
On eyes, and hands, and hair, and throat,
And magnify one's lady's charms,
Like Troubadour or knight at arms,
Unless one has the luck to know
That she would rather have it so.
Faint heart—I know: I'm not the man
To do it, though my betters can,
Suffice it all the words are there
To thrill the circumambient air,
The moment I'm allowed: meanwhile
Why not encourage you to smile:
Relieve the tedium of a scene
You're used to? since I do not mean
To veil my eyes or bow my head,
Or weep, or wish that I were dead,
Or fail to fight the fight of life,
As keenly as were you my wife.
You're smiling still: you don't believe
A hopeless lover would not grieve;
A grieving lover would not show
Some outward token of his woe:
I'm joking, am I? be it so.

An Afterthought*.

The good a man does from time to time,
  Gets thanks and praise for, is crowned with bays for
Or married for, sung for in verse sublime,
Or placed for in marble in civic halls
Or hung for in oils on palace walls:

Is good that deserves to be hymned, no doubt,
  Commemorated, and duly fêted,
And otherwise made much noise about:
And of course it is well that the men are found,
To do such good, and to be so crowned.

But all the good that was ever done,
  Or even tried for, or longed or sighed for,
By all the great men under the sun,
Since men were invented, or genius glowed,
Or the world was furnished for our abode:

Is worth far less than the merest smile,
  Or touch of finger, or sighs that linger,
When cheeks grow dimpled, and lips lack guile,
On the face of the women whom God gives grace
To—well on a certain woman's face.

* See "A Thought"; *Lapsus Calami*, p. 45.

To a Rejected Lover.

Friend, why so gloomy? why so glum?
  Why such a dull lack-lustre eye?
At festive meetings why so dumb?
  From dearest friend so apt to fly?
You must have got a reason: come!

I know she's young, I know she's fair;
  I know she's beautiful and sweet:
I know her wealth of golden hair,
  Her sunny eyes, her tiny feet;
I do not bid you not despair

Of ever being more to her
  Than half a dozen other men:
She's going, if I do not err
  To marry some one else: what then?
I see no cause for such a stir.

It isn't what one *hasn't got*
  That ought to quench the light of life:
It's what one *loses:* is it not?
  It's death, or treason in a wife:
It's finding one's unhappy lot

Comprises foes, and friends untrue,
  Grief, worry, sickness, even crime:
And I should only pity you,
  If aught of these should come with time:
Not blame you as I own I do.

You haven't got a thousand pounds:
  You cannot write yourself M.P.:
There are not any solid grounds
  For thinking you will ever be
A very famous man: but, zounds!

You don't, on that account, exclaim
  That life's a curse, or birth a blight,
Nor do you minimise, or blame,
  Such merits as are yours by right:
Well, be your conduct still the same!

From what you haven't gaily turn
  To what you have: the world's alive:
Still pulses beat, still passions burn:
  There's still to work, there's still to strive:
The cure is easy to discern.

I do not bid you to forget,
  Nor say that she is full of flaws,
Nor rail on womankind: nor yet
  Bestow a meed of just applause
On Amabel, or Violet:

Nor say the sea is full of fish
  As good as those which others catch:
Indeed I do not greatly wish
  To urge you to another match:
I only say that life's a dish

Well worth the eating, even when
  You cannot get the sauce you like;
You have a pair of hands, a pen,
  A tongue: I've seen you work, and strike
A blow worth striking now and then.

So don't be gloomy, don't be glum,
  Nor give a thought to what you lack:
Take what you have: no longer dumb
  Nor idle; hit misfortune back,
And own that I have reason: come!

Paint and Ink.

To C. W. F.

You take a brush, and I take a pen:
  You mix bright colours, I use black ink:
You cover a canvas, you first of men,
  I write on a sheet for a scribbler meet:
Well, a contrast's a contrast: I will not shrink.

First you compose: a line's grand sweep,
  A break, a blend, a guide for our eyes:
You've a tone to settle, a curve to keep,
  An impression to catch, new tints to match;
And a lesson behind it surely lies.

And every touch of your busy brush,
  And every scrape of your palette-knife,
Each squeeze of the tube whence the pigments gush,
  Each rub of your thumb, helps the whole become
A living page from the scroll of life.

There's a landscape, a face, which displays—you know it—
  A fact, a fancy, a thought, a dream,
Which the many miss; so, my picture-poet,
  You catch a part not the whole,—that's art,—
And fix it for ever: a simpler theme

For a man to grasp at, conceive, remember,
Than that which you saw and which we see not:
There's your *Bathing Girl* and your *Bleak December*,
Which you paint and exhibit for fools to gibbet:
You wrote the play, but God gave the plot.

And we in the pit have caught the meaning
You caught, or so much as you saved for us;
But here I perceive you intervening,
I hear your stricture: "A picture's a picture:
Colour and form:" well! come, discuss.

Is there nothing but colour and form? no soul?
A judicious blend, an arrangement clever:
Reds and blues: lines curves: and is that the whole?
No hint designed of the truth behind:
Just a thing of beauty, a joy for ever!

I think you are wronging yourself my friend,
And the noble craft that you ply so well:
For colour and form have a certain end,
And composition, or else ambition
Were better bestowed than on paint: you tell

New truths to us; draw for us morals old
From what seemed to have no moral at all:
And all's not done when your picture's sold,
Nor when you're R.A., at a future day,
And your picture glows on a palace wall.

To see, and to paint, and to know at sight
How much wants painting, how much neglect,
Is a noble function, I know: you're right:
But by nature's laws there is never a cause
That cannot or does not produce effect.

And, to point the contrast, and draw the moral,
I too, with my humbler art, aspire
To a name which I hope you will not quarrel
To see me claim: to the noble name
Of an artist: in truth I know no higher.

But the metres I choose, and the rules I keep,
And the lilt of the verses I write for sport,
And the rhythm of lines that have made you sleep,
And the style of my prose, which, goodness knows,
Might grow far better and still fall short;

All these, were they better, or even free
From faults, would never enable you
In the scribbler a brother in arms to see
In the noble fray which you fight to day
For the good, the beautiful and the true.

I've thoughts to interpret and truths to teach,
I've an unread lesson at first to read,
Then to state so much of as e'er can reach
The brain of the man in the street: my plan
Is the same as your own, Sir, it is indeed!

I blend and arrange and compose: subdue
And indicate, aye and emphasize:
Till the world gets a hint of the truth: and you?
You do just the same, and the artist's name
Is for writer and painter the highest prize.

Your colour and form, my words and style,
Your wondrous brush and my busy pen,
Are our medium, our tools: and all the while
The question for each is what truths we teach
And how we interpret the world to men.

So I do dare claim to be kin with you,
And I hold you higher than if your task
Were doing no more than you say you do:
We shall live, if at all, we shall stand or fall,
As men before whom the world doffs its mask
And who answer the questions our fellows ask.

A Paradox?

To F. C. H.

(*A Conversation Recapitulated.*)

To find out what you cannot do,
  And then to go and do it:
There lies the golden rule: but few
I ever found above the ground,
  Except myself, who knew it.

You bid me do from day to day
  The single thing I can do;
I can't do what I can't, you say?
Indeed I can; why, hang it man!
  I solve it *ambulando*.

I cannot draw the simplest thing:
  I cannot guess a riddle:
I cannot dance, or skate, or sing:
I can't compose, and, goodness knows,
  I cannot play the fiddle.

And yet, to take a single case,
Of all an illustration,
At thirty-two (to my disgrace?)
I did begin the violin,
By way of recreation.

The way to go to work is taught
By precept and correction;
To do it nearly as you ought
You learn by force of pains,—of course
I don't suggest perfection.

"But, ah! you can't acquire an ear,
If Nature don't bestow it:"
Excuse me: try before you sneer:
The pains you take an "ear" will make,
As practice makes a poet.

The sounds, by Nature's laws, are there;
And all one's education
Is just to catch them in the air:
Success is due entirely to
Attentive observation.

"Trained ear: trained fingers,—net result,
A tenth-rate fiddler." Granted!
Plus hours well spent in patient cult
Of music, which you own is rich
In gifts not else implanted.

Well! so with all the other things:
  You *can* learn how to do them:
You're born with rudiments of wings:
You'll fly in time, and—end sublime!—
  You get a pleasure through them.

"Ah, well!" you answer, "be it so:
  Although of course it's not so:
You've learned to scrape a fiddle-bow;
And what remains? Your addled brains
  Collapse: men die forgot so!

"You've done the thing you couldn't do:
  You're just a dilettante:
Yes, that's about the truth of you:
You'll end, I'm sure, an amateur,
  A mere pococurante!"

Ah! there, my friend, I *know* you're wrong!
  For what you're best at doing,
Law, painting, science, speech or song,
Is just what you are bound to do,
  Whate'er beside pursuing.

The small pursuits you undertake
  For innocent diversion,
No earthly difference will make:
The work goes on till life be gone:
  I stand by that assertion!

Although a modest man, my friend,
I'll make you this confession:
I feel that I have got an "End"—
A *telos*, eh? as you would say—
My *métier*, my profession:

Which is——: well, never mind the name;
But, Frank, I do assure you,
Whatever other little game
I chance to play from day to day—
(I hope I do not bore you?

I'm aiming at a certain chat
I had with you, and therefore
You *must* attend, my worthy friend)—
Will not effect the least neglect
Of what I really care for.

Question and Answer.

To H. R.

The Question.

The river is flowing,
  The stars coming forth:
Great ruddy clouds going
  From Westward to North:

The rushes are waving,
  The water's still blue:
And I am behaving
  Decorously too:

The amorous zephyr
  Breathes soft in our ear:
Who hears not is deafer
  Than adders, my dear:

Ah! list to the whisper
  Of waters and sky!
Thames, vagabond lisper,
  Grows subtle and sly.

How trebly delicious
  The air-draughts we quaff:
The hour is propitious:—
  Oh!...why do you laugh?

The Answer.

Ask the sky why it flushes,
  The clouds why they glow:
The weir why it gushes,
  The reeds why they grow;

The moon why it rises,
  The sun why it sets:
Her why she surprises,
  Him why he forgets;

The star why it twinkles,
  The west why it shines:
The brow why it wrinkles,
  The heart why it pines:

Mankind why they blunder,
  The corn why there's chaff:
Ask yourself why you wonder—
  Not me why I laugh!

Blue Hills. An Allegory.

To A. M. P.

Years ago, in the land of my birth,
When my head was little above the earth,
I stood by the side of the grass-blades tall,
And a quickset hedge was a mighty wall,
And a measureless forest I often found
In a swampy acre of rush-clad ground:
But, when I could see it, the best of the view
Was a distant circle, the Hills of Blue.

Higher we grow as the long years pass,
And I now look down on the growing grass;
I see the top where I saw the side,
Some beauties are lost as the view grows wide,
I see over things that I couldn't see through:
But my limit is still the Hills of Blue.

As a child I sought them, and found them not,
Footsore and weary, tired and hot;
They were still the bulwark of all I could see,
And still at a fabulous distance from me;
I wondered if age and strength could teach
How to traverse the plain, the mountains reach;
Meanwhile, whatever a child might do,
They still were far and they still were blue.

Well I've reached them at last, those distant Hills;
I've reached their base through a world of ills;
I have toiled and laboured and wandered far,
With my constant eyes on a shifting star:
And ever, as nearer I came, they grew,
Larger and larger, but, ah! less blue.

Green I have found them, green and brown,
Studded with houses, o'erhanging a town,
Feeding the plain below with streams,
Dappled with shadows and brightening with beams,
Image of scenes I had left behind,
Merely a group of the hilly kind:
And beyond them a prospect as fair to view
As the old, and bounded by Hills as blue.

But I will not seek those further Hills,
Nor travel the course of the outward rills;
I have lost the faith of my childhood's day;
Let me dream (it is only a dream) while I may;
I will put my belief to no cruel test:
As I doze on this green deceptive crest,
I will try to believe, as I used to do,
There are some Blue Hills which are really blue.

The Dawn of the Year.

Once in the year, if you get up early,
  You may get—just once—what you can't but praise:
Not a sky that's blue, or a lawn that's pearly,
  Though these may be there as on other days:
But a bright cool still delicious thrill,
  Which tells you October is come or near:—
    The Dawn of the Year!

For I take it the end of the Long Vacation
  Which repeoples the Temple and Lincoln's Inn,
And quickens the pulse of civilisation,
  And ends the hush of our daily din,
Is really the season, by light of reason,
  Which ought to and does to the wise appear
    The Dawn of the Year.

Years die in July and are dead till September:
  By the first of October the New Year's born:
It's a sturdy infant in mid December,
  And reaches its prime some April morn:
Hot and weary in June, it must perish soon,
  It is working too hard: it will break: but *here*
    Is the Dawn of the Year.

And this is the time for good resolutions:
He's a laggard who waits till Christmas past:
In obedience to meaningless institutions
He starts on a year which can but last
Six months or so: while we, who know,
Find in golden autumn, not winter drear,
The Dawn of the Year.

You surely remember the feeling I mean?
It's a misty morning, portending heat:
Scarce a leaf has fallen, the trees are green,
And the last late flowers are bright and sweet,
By the sight and scent summer's not yet spent,
But there's something new in the atmosphere
The Dawn of the Year.

Just a touch of healthy autumnal cold,
Not the dismal shiver of rainy summers;
And a sun no longer a blaze of gold
To light the frolic of idle mummers,
But a genial guide for the busy tide
Of men who have work to do, shows clear
The Dawn of the Year.

So back to work in the London streets,
Or College courts, or clamorous Schools;
We have tasted and dwelt on the passing sweets
Of sunlit leisure: resume your tools,
Get back to your labours, my excellent neighbours,
And greet with a spirit that work can cheer,
The Dawn of the Year.

Battle.

How seldom it happens in these dull days,
When we're all decorous, and all behave,
That our pulses can beat at fever heat
And our deeds be sudden and bright and brave,
In the keen delight of a stand-up fight,
When the wronger falls and the wronged wins bays.

To know you are right and to say so boldly,
To prove your strength by a downright blow,
To punish and pound your foe till the ground
Is red with his blood!—but then, you know,
We "make up a visage"—: the worst of this age
Is just that we bear our wrongs so coldly.

There's a man—for the matter of that there are men—
I could deal with just as our fathers dealt
With those who defied their manly pride;
Oh! to feel the wild delight they felt
When face to face with a foe: disgrace
To inflict, and glory to win: but then

We've the honour of being so civilised,
So good, so kind and so truly wise,
And we seldom say at the present day
"Come on you—" what you can all surmise:—
If we did, we should gain! but it's all in vain,
And my villains will die unpulverised!

But if I could have what some have prayed for,
One life more to live how and when I chose,
I would ask to belong to one age when wrong
Is punished by honest unflinching blows,
When to hate's to fight in the open light,
And a dire offence is as direly paid for.

The Malefactor's Plea.

Of sentences that stir my bile,
  Of phrases I detest,
There's one beyond all others vile;
  "He did it for the best."

Of course he did: I don't suppose,
  Nor can you think I should,
The man's among my deadliest foes,
  Or is not fairly good.

Of course he did it for the best:
  What should he do it for?
But did he do it? that's the test:
  I ask to know no more.

Alas! he did: and here am I,
  Quite ruined, half disgraced;
And you can really ask me why
  My wrath is not effaced:

And there is he, good worthy man,
  With self-esteem possessed,
Still saying, as of course he can,
  "I did it for the best."

No evil deed was ever done,
  Or honest man withstood,
Since first this weary world begun,
  Except for some one's good.

And can it signify to me
  Whose good he did it for?
Mine was it? thus 'twas wont to be,
  And will be ever more.

When inoffensive people plant
  A dagger in your breast,
Your good is what they really want:
  They do it for the best.

LAPSUS ULTIMI.

The Splinter.

Where's the philosopher can bear the toothache patiently?

One stormy day in winter,
  When all the world was snow,
I chanced upon a splinter,
  Which ran into my toe.
The world went round:
The stubborn ground
  Defied the deadliest dinter:
They brought me tea,
And muffins three:
My little maid
Fetched marmalade:
My grace I said,
And breakfasted:
But all that morn in winter
I thought about the splinter.

At ten o'clock
The postman's knock:
A friend was dead:
Another wed:
Two invitations:
Five objurgations:

A screed from my solicitor:
They brought the *Times:*
A list of crimes:
A deadly fight
'Twixt black and white:
A note from "B"
On Mr. G.,
And other things
From cats to Kings,
Known to that grand Inquisitor:—
But all that morn in winter,
I thought about the splinter.

But, oh; at last
A lady passed
  Beside my chamber casement,
With modest guise
And down-cast eyes
  And fair beyond amazement:
She passed away
Like some bright fay
  Too fair for earthly regions,
So sweet a sight
Would put to flight
  The fiend and all his legions!
And I, that noon in winter,
Forgot the cruel splinter.

My Education.

At school I sometimes read a book,
  And learned a lot of lessons;
Some small amount of pains I took,
  And showed much acquiescence
In what my masters said, good men!
  Yet after all I quite
Forgot the most of it: but then
                I learned to write.

At Lincoln's Inn I'd read a brief,
  Abstract a title, study
Great paper-piles, beyond belief
  Inelegant and muddy:
The whole of these as time went by
  I soon forgot: indeed
I tried to: yes: but by and by
                I learned to read.

By help of Latin, Greek and Law
  I now can write and read too:
Then perish each forgotten saw,
  Each fact I do not need too:
But still whichever way I turn
  At one sad task I stick:
I fear that I shall never learn
                Arithmetic.

After the Golden Wedding.

(Three Soliloquies.)

I. *The husband's.*

She's not a faultless woman; no!
  She's not an angel in disguise:
She has her rivals here below:
  She's not an unexampled prize:

She does not always see the point
  Of little jests her husband makes:
And, when the world is out of joint,
  She makes a hundred small mistakes:

She's not a miracle of tact:
  Her temper's not the best I know:
She's got her little faults in fact,
  Although I never tell her so.

But this, my wife, is why I hold you
  As good a wife as ever stepped,
And why I meant it when I told you
  How cordially our feast I kept:

You've lived with me these fifty years,
  And all the time you loved me dearly:
I may have given you cause for tears:
  I may have acted rather queerly.

I ceased to love you long ago:
  I loved another for a season:
As time went on I came to know
  Your worth, my wife: and saw the reason

Why such a wife as you have been
  Is more than worth the world beside;
You loved me all the time, my Queen;
  You couldn't help it if you tried.

You loved me as I once loved you,
  As each loved each beside the altar:
And whatsoever I might do,
  Your loyal heart could never falter.

And, if you sometimes fail me, sweetest,
  And don't appreciate me, dear,
No matter: such defects are meetest
  For poor humanity, I fear.

And all's forgiven, all's forgot,
  On this our golden wedding day;
For, see! she loves me: does she not?
  So let the world e'en go its way.

I'm old and nearly useless now,
  Each day a greater weakling proves me:
There's compensation anyhow:
  I still possess a wife that loves me.

2. *The wife's.*

Dear worthy husband! good old man!
  Fit hero of a golden marriage:
I'll show towards you, if I can,
  An absolutely wifely carriage.

The months or years which your career
  May still comprise before you perish,
Shall serve to prove that I, my dear,
  Can honour, and obey, and cherish.

Till death us part, as soon he must,
  (And you, my dear, should shew the way)
I hope you'll always find me just
  The same as on our wedding day.

I never loved you, dearest: never!
  Let that be clearly understood:
I thought you good, and rather clever,
  And found you really rather good.

And, what was more, I loved another,
  But couldn't get him: well, but, then
You're just as bad, my erring brother,
  You most impeccable of men:—

Except for this: my love was married
  Some weeks before I married you:
While you, my amorous dawdler, tarried
  Till we'd been wed a year or two.

You loved me at our wedding: I
  Loved some one else: and after that
I never cast a loving eye
  On others: you—well, tit for tat!

But after all I made you cheerful:
  Your whims I've humoured: saw the point
Of all your jokes: grew duly tearful,
  When you were sad, yet chose the joint

You liked the best of all for dinner,
  And soothed you in your hours of woe:
Although a miserable sinner,
  I *am* a good wife, as wives go.

I bore with you and took your side,
  And kept my temper all the time:
I never flirted; never cried,
  Nor ranked it as a heinous crime,

When you preferred another lady,
  Or used improper words to me,
Or told a story more than shady,
  Or snored and snorted after tea,

Or otherwise gave proofs of being
A dull and rather vain old man:
I still succeeded in agreeing
With all you said, (the safest plan),

Yet always strove my point to carry,
And make you do as I desired:
I'm *glad* my people made me marry!
They hit on just what I required.

Had love been wanted—well, I couldn't
Have given what I'd not to give;
Or had a genius asked me! wouldn't
The man have suffered? now, we live

Among our estimable neighbours
A decent and decorous life:
I've earned by my protracted labours
The title of a model wife.

But when beneath the turf you're sleeping,
And I am sitting here in black,
Engaged, as they'll suppose, in weeping,
I shall not wish to have you back.

3. *The Vicar's.*

A good old couple! kind and wise!
And oh! what love for one another!
They've won, those two, life's highest prize,
Oh! let us copy them, my brother.

A Pair of Portraits.

1. *He.*

Oh yes! I know the sort of man!
  A not entirely vacant eye:
A ready smile, a kind of style;
  A forehead adequately high:
Curls more or less Olympian.

A fund of common things to say,
  A list of common actions done:
A taste for tea, a poll degree,
  A mild delight in harmless fun:
In short, a rather taking way.

The type is common: wherefore tarry
  To paint what all must know so well?
He's rather tall, his feet are small:
  He's thoroughly conventional:
A man who moves in common grooves,
  And never startles you at all:
Or, all in one sad phrase to tell,
  The sort of man that women marry.

2. *She.*

I know the girl: "divinely fair"
  Of course "and most divinely tall:"
A modest yet a queenly air:
  A voice that's keen but musical:
A mind above the common run,
But soft and kind, when all is done,
  And womanly withal.

A girl who might aspire to light
  A gifted worker's rugged way:
To make the very darkness bright
  With love's illuminating ray:
To kindle some grave rugged man,
With genius, ready, if it can,
  To flash upon the day.

A girl to soothe when days are drear:
  To cheer you on when hope grows dim:
A girl who should not greatly fear,
  For truth, however harsh and grim,
To scorn conventionalities:
The sort of woman, if you please,
  Who marries men like him.

A Pair of Fools.

1. *His account of the matter.*

I met you dear, I met you: I can't be robbed of that;
Despite the crowd, the babble, and the military band;
I met you, yes, I met you: and by your side I sat;
I looked at you, I talked to you, and twice I held your hand.

When you are with me, dearest, the crowd is out of sight;
The men who smoke, the men who pose, the sharpers, and the flats;
The people quite unfit to walk beneath the heaven's light;
The green and yellow women with intolerable hats.

The sun was bright: the dahlias flashed: the trees, in summer sheen,
Shut out the dusty houses, hushed the turmoil of the street;

But, had the charm of peace enhanced the sweetness
of the scene,
Even so your beauty had eclipsed the whole of
it, my sweet.

I talked to you, you listened; I passed from grave
to gay,
With what a world of sympathy you gently mur-
mured "Yes!"
A merry "No," a soft "Perhaps," a glance the other
way:
An eyebrow raised, a foot that tapped, a rustle
of your dress.

You smiled, ah! what a smile is yours; your depth
of hazel eyes
Shook conscious of the thought within, expressed
but unexplained;
Your speaking face that glowed with all a girl's
sedate surprise;
"That brow of hers," as Browning says: the
thoughts that it contained!

I talked as ne'er before; to you my eloquence be-
longed;
You spoke, dear, with my lips, 'twas I that listened
and approved;
Strange subtle phrases sprang, and thoughts as deep
as novel thronged:
I know you knew, I swear you did, how ardently
I loved.

We parted, and you looked at me in silence: and I knew
The meaning of the look: I'll come to-morrow if I live;
To-morrow I shall come, and I will say a word to you,
And you will speak, at last, the words that hope and rest can give.

2. *Her account of the matter.*

I met him in the park my dear; he *is* a funny man;
Impossible to separate his earnest from his fun;
He talks, and talks, it's deadly dull: I smile, you know the plan;
And, when particularly grave, he makes a jest of one.

The park was full of people; Maud had such a lovely dress
A dream of greeny silk and gauze and primrose ribbons, oh!
I wished I had one; and her hat! I tried and tried to guess
How much it cost; she buys the stuff and makes a hat, you know.

I think I sat with him an hour: there *was* a crowd my dear,
Some pretty girls: one lovely one: and four attractive men:
Old Mrs Robinson was there and Mr Vere de Vere,
And not another soul I knew: I shall not go again.

I don't know what we talked about: I smiled: the same old smile:
I "yes'd" and "no'd" and "really'd," till I thought he must discover
That I was listening to the band: I wondered all the while
If such a dull old gentleman could ever be a lover.

Perhaps some solemn sober girl with eyes a foot across,
Smooth neatly-parted hair, no stays, elastic-sided boots,
Will yearn at him and marry him: I shan't regret his loss:
I really think some kinds of men are lower than the brutes.

He went at last, the prig! He'll come to-morrow if he can,
He means to recollect our talk—*ours* mind you—all his life:
Confound—I beg your pardon, dear—well, bless the little man!
And bless the little woman who becomes his little wife!

3. *My account of the matter.*

A pair of fools: the man was vain,
The woman frivolous, 'tis plain:
And each an egoist in thought:
One dived for self: the other sought
Self on the surface: fools, you see:
Two fools. Perhaps there'll soon be three:
For now they're married, he and she.

Elegy on de Marsay.

Come cats and kittens everywhere,
  Whate'er of cat the world contains,
From Tabby on the kitchen stair
To Tiger burning in his lair
  Unite your melancholy strains;

Weep, likewise, kindred dogs, and weep
  Domestic fowls, and pigs, and goats;
Weep horses, oxen, poultry, sheep,
Weep finny monsters of the deep,
  Weep foxes, weasels, badgers, stoats.

Weep more than all, exalted man
  And hardly less exalted maid;
Out-weep creation if you can
Which never yet, since time began,
  Such creditable grief displayed.

It little profiteth that we
  Go proudly up and down the land,
And drive our ships across the sea,
And babble of Eternity,
  And hold the Universe in hand;

If, when our pride is at its height,
  And glory sits upon our head,
A sudden mist can dim the light,
A voice be heard in pride's despite,
  A voice which cries "de Marsay's dead."

De Marsay dead! and never more
  Shall I behold that silky form
Lie curled upon the conscious floor
With sinuous limbs and placid snore,
  As one who sleeps through calm and storm?

De Marsay dead! De Marsay dead!
  And are you dead, de Marsay, you?
The sun is shining over head
With glory undiminishèd,
  And you are dead; let me die too!

Then birds, and beasts, and fishes come,
  And people come, of all degrees;
Beat, sadly beat the funeral drum,
And let the gloomy organ hum
  With dark mysterious melodies.

And (when we've adequately moaned),
  For all the world to wonder at,
Let this great sentence be intoned:
No cat so sweet a mistress owned;
  No mistress owned so sweet a cat.

Senex to Matt. Prior.

Ah! Matt.: old age has brought to me
Thy wisdom, less thy certainty:
The world's a jest, and joy's a trinket:
I knew that once: but now—I think it.

Cynicus to W. Shakspere.

You wrote a line too much, my sage,
Of seers the first, and first of sayers;
For only half the world's a stage,
And only all the women players.

IN MEMORIAM.

1. J. R. Lowell.

Lowell: the labours of your noble life,
Your state-craft, and your high poetic skill
Were aye a force that made for union, till
The peace now reigning hushed the ancient strife
Between the mighty land that gave you life,
And that whose kinship distance could not kill.
I think your death has drawn us nearer still!
Now with your praise our island home is rife,
While rings your continent with equal praise;
And here, as there, we sadly quote your lays.
And Lowell! I who knew you, also know
Some that you loved in England, who to-day
Not only share your countless readers' woe,
But mourn a dear old friend that's passed away.

August 13, 1891.

2. The Rt. Hon. H. C. Raikes.

No need upon your honoured tomb
  The words *de Mortuis* to write:
For while we mourn your early doom,
  Your merits strike on all men's sight.

The qualities you chanced to want,
  How unimportant they appear:
Whatever fortune did not grant,
  The greatest gift of all was there.

You never deigned by any shift
  Your share of daily toil to shirk:
You had the grand essential gift—
  Capacity for honest work.

By work you lived, by work you died,
  And earned a name, if any can,
That's almost always misapplied,
  An honest English *Working Man.*

And I, who dared in boyhood's day
  To write, in later years to print,
A somewhat disrespectful lay,
  —Though there was naught of malice in't—

Should like to say I'm not the last
  To recognise your sterling worth:
Forgive my strictures of the past,
  The overflow of harmless mirth;

For this at least is wholly true;
  I should be more than satisfied
To work as well and hard as you,
  To die in harness, as you died.

Sept. 1891.

AQUARELLES.

In a Garden.

Sitting on a garden-seat,
  All a summer afternoon,
Reading, while the envious heat
  Haunts you like a weary tune:
Watching other people playing,
  Playing at a certain game;
Bodies flitting, twisting, swaying:
White balls flying, white forms vying
  With each other: can you blame
One who says: "The worst of men is
He who first devised Lawn-Tennis"?

In a villa's garden plot
  Such a game might be allowed:
When a London square grows hot,
  Let a fashionable crowd
Gather, where the brown turf hardens,
  With their Sunday hats and racquets:
But in perfect College gardens

Made for leisure, rife with pleasure,
Where men go in flannel jackets,
Read their books, and dream their dreams,
Forge their future volumes' themes;

Is it decent, is it right,
That a man should have to look at
Such a desolating sight,
One so made to throw a book at,
As a little don that's prancing,
With a wild, perspiring air,
All about the court is dancing,
Gallopading, masquerading,
Though nor grace nor strength be there
As an athlete? Let him do it
Somewhere else, or duly rue it.
. . . . . .
Nay, more: it was here, was it not,
That we wandered, two friends and I,
Past the end of June, when a large half-moon
Sailed sad in a sober sky,
And the trees that were leafy and thick forgot
To be green, and the mist-wreaths wandered by.

And the world beyond was a dim expanse
Of blue that was green, and green that was blue,
And the bushes were black which enclosed our track,
And the flowers were dashed with a blackness too,
And caught in a rapture, or rapt in a trance,
The garden was waiting: such hours are few!

For at first there were remnants of rosy light
  On the tall grey chapel beyond the trees,
And the west not ablaze, but aglow with rays
  That had faded: a whisper of rest the breeze,
And the silence a tremulous still delight,
  And the unseen meadows as unseen seas.

And we noted a spot where the purple shade,
  Which hid the tree-trunks and dimmed the grass,
Seemed to mean far more than it meant before,
  Till all that we fancied took shape and was:
And we looked on a deep, reposeful glade,
  Whence Satyr and Dryad and Faun might pass.

And that's what the garden must mean for me,
  For me and my friends who were there that night:
What wonder, then, if I hate the men
  Who prove beyond doubt, when the noon is bright,
That my glade is a lawn which can easily be
  Deformed with horrible squares of white,
  And peopled with forms that offend my sight.

Autumn Thoughts.

Winter in the College Garden,
  Twigs for leaves, and snow for grass,
Biting blasts that sear and harden
  Where soft zephyrs used to pass,
Hidden places, white bare spaces;—
  What a change it was!

Months have passed since I beheld it:
  Soon it may be here again,
Summer's gone: grey ghosts expelled it:
  Sad's the murmur of the rain:—
"Winter, winter!"—dreary hinter:
  Hear the dull refrain.

As I sit this wet October
  Russet leaf-clouds whirling by,
Can I but be grave and sober,
  Drooping spirit, downcast eye,
Thinking dimly, brooding grimly;—
  Winter, winter's nigh?

And the world that I'm recalling:—
  Such a world of burnished snow!
Scarce a brown leaf left for falling:
  Not a green leaf left to show
How the splendid colours blended
  Twenty weeks ago!

Up and down the long white spaces,
  Where dim leaves are whirling now,
How I gazed on phantom-faces,
  How I planned—no matter how!
Here I wandered, here I pondered,
  Here I made a vow.

Cold crisp renovating weather,
  Clear and colourless and bright,
This, I think, should go together
  With a mind intent on right,
Plans revolving, deeds resolving,
  Seeking for the light.

Yes, I made a vow, and wrote it
  In my heart, nine months ago:
Framed a contract—I could quote it:
  Drew a line to walk by—so:
Have I kept it? or o'erleapt it?
  Well, I hardly know.

After Sunset.

1. *Aug.* 30, 1891.

At Magna Charta Island.

A grey lawn cut by the river's brink,
And then the stream,
Dun slabs of marble, splashed with ink,
Beyond—a dream!—
A purple shield of blazing bronze
Streaked here and there with silver: a pair
Of rainbow-coloured swans.

And above the blaze of the burnished river
The burnished sky,
Bronze banners of vapour which hardly quiver
As the breeze goes by,
Girt round with a dark blue belt of cloud;
One primrose patch, which the ripples catch,
And the first of the stars' blithe crowd.

And between the water and sky one observes
A slope, tree-crowned:
Black tree-tops tracing a thousand curves,
Where gloom's profound;
And grey-green meadows from slope to stream,
With a steep black bank at the edge: how thank
The fate which allows man's brain to house
Such a spirit-soothing dream.

2. *Sept.* 5, 1891.

In the Lock-Cut: Old Windsor.

Great purple clouds in the western sky,
  Hung thick o'er a blaze of golden white,
And below that glory there seems to lie,
  A cushion of silver: not so bright
But it dulls to a grey that entombs the day
  And heralds the march of night.

One tree hides a third of the gorgeous west,—
  A disk of black is its dusky growth—
Yet not hides: nay perhaps displays at best
  Through the chinks which it opens, nothing loth:
While its outline bold cuts silver and gold,
  And heightens the blaze of both.

And up to the glory of golden white,
  With the purple above and the silver below,
There's a river lane that is darkly bright,
  Softly and smoothly and quietly aglow,
Blue willows beside it, night hasting to hide it,
  Day sorry to let it go.

The tree grows blacker, the night falls fast,
  And purple and silver and white must fade:
But something was shown us which can't but last:
  Has a song been sung? has a play been played?
Has a lesson been taught, or was all for naught?
  Well—nothing endures like the past.

3. *Sept.* 9, 1891.

Off the Bells of Ouseley.

The Poet.

The water is black and opaque and polished,
  Not a ripple to break it, or ray to illume:
From bank to bank, like a sunless tank,
  Swept clear of ripples by some witch-broom:
What's it like, dear Muse? come! impart your views,
  Or, faith, you'll be soon abolished.

The Muse.

Just the dripping asphalte of rain-washed Paris,
  With our gliding punt for the rumbling tram;
And your face shining black in the glistening track:
  On the bank, for the workman who drains his dram,
One willow as grim as a phantom dim
  Evoked by Augustus Harris.

DESINE PERVICAX.

Labenti Calamo.

Adieu, dear pen! thy merry quips
  And facile cranks have had their day;
Thy not unprofitable "slips"
  Have passed in printer's ink away.

Nor less thy days of serious verse
  On love, and art, and such high themes
Have suffered the primeval curse,
  And died into the realm of dreams.

We are but frauds, the pair of us:
  And if a while you've masqueraded
As quill from wing of Pegasus,
  That little fancy's gone and faded.

You're dying, pen: but I am not:
  You're old; I'm barely middle-aged;
And, while you comfortably rot,
  I shall be otherwise engaged.

I've done my best at stringing rhymes,
And found it pleasant, goodness knows;
I've shunned some errors, spared some crimes,
And now I'm going back to prose.

Yes, prose is what I wrote at first,
And prose is what I'll live by writing,
It's not by any means the worst
Of trades, nor yet the least exciting.

For, mark you, writing is an art,
As all but daily hacks acknowledge;
It ought to form the highest part
Of men's curriculum at College.

It's easy when you've got to scan,
And got to rhyme before you print,
To make a stanza, where a man
Shall see of art at least a hint.

But when you're writing prose as pure
As Jourdain talked, but didn't know it,
You'll have to make, you may be sure,
Some efforts easier for a poet.

A sentence, lacking rhyme and measure,
But none the less a work of art,
Costs greater pains, gives greater pleasure
Than much that's dearer in the mart.

Your half unfinished statuette,
  Or humble tune which 'scapes e'en stealing,
A sketch you make and then forget,
  Has more of art, and more of feeling,

Than some correct colossal bust,
  Or operatic morceau fine,
Which wins encomiums loud and just,
  Or picture hanging on the line.

So such a humble work in prose,
  Which says what has been said before,
Or article, or letter shows,
  To those who know their business, more

Of true artistic worth, my pen,
  Than poetry that's capped and quoted,
Wherever cultivated men
  Praise that to which they're all devoted.

I mean to reappear as one
  Whose prose is better than his verse:
Farewell, my friend through days of fun!
  Farewell, deft liner of my purse!

We've lived right gaily you and I:
  We've had some sport, and made some money:
And, if we could not make folks cry,
  We *were* occasionally funny.

We've argued too in verse: we've tried
To prove, disprove, deny, assert;
We've blustered, whispered, laughed and sighed,
But never yet did any hurt.

Yet both were certain all the time,
As any candid friend could be,
That though we might succeed in rhyme
We could not rise to poetry.

The curtain falls: the play is done:
But I am in another piece:
I've got to dress: the band's begun
It's time for our discourse to cease.

I go to fly at higher game:
At prose as good as I can make it:
And, though it brings nor gold nor fame,
I will not, while I live, forsake it.

Farewell! I've other work to do:
Another way of reaching men:
But I shall still remember you
You've served me well: adieu, dear Pen!

August, 1891.

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